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THE MAGIC OF WORDS<sup>1</sup>

God wove a web of loveliness,  
Of clouds and stars and birds,  
But made not anything at all  
So beautiful as words.

They shine around our simple earth  
With golden shadowings,  
And every common thing they touch  
Is exquisite with wings.

So sang Anna Hemstead Branch. And so singing she has reminded us of the wonderful allurements, of the bright capacity for melody, of the rich and glowing color, and of the strange secrets of magic which fall from the lips of a man who knows how to turn speech into a weapon. It was said of a man in a notable debate: "He struck his opponent with a word. He felled him with a phrase. He slew him with a sentence. He buried him in one last explosive period of powerful argument."

There is no more curious weakness than the helplessness of some men of intellectual discipline in the presence of words. Great burly words overawe them. They have ideas, but the gay mocking words which they want to use in expressing their thoughts make faces at them and run off quite beyond reach. There is no more immediate evidence of a fine and vigorous culture than the capacity to bend words to the purpose of one's mind with the strength of an assured mastery. "I am going to make words my slaves," said a virile student in a certain university. There was many a stiff fight. The words were fierce young steeds not at all easy to tame. But at last they made the inevitable surrender. And another man was ready to do a man's work with the language which so many men about him used with slovenly incapacity. There is no end of significant things which can engage the attention of the college student. And one of the genuinely important and challenging tasks of his college career has to do with the taming of words so that they will come when they are called.

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LYNN HAROLD HOUGH

INFLATED CURRENCY<sup>2</sup>

Speech is a sort of currency. It is the currency of the mind. And it is a currency which suffers from all the period of inflation. Indeed,

<sup>1</sup> Originally used by the author at Northwestern University.

<sup>2</sup> From bulletin of Central M. E. Church, Detroit, August 28, 1921.

the speech of some people becomes so hopelessly inflated that they end by being verbally bankrupt.

Whenever our words promise more than we can pay we are entering upon the deadly process of inflation. Whenever they express more than we really mean we are using bank notes without adequate relation to the gold which is in the bank. Whenever we say what we do not mean at all we have left the realm of inflation and have begun the process of counterfeiting.

A nation may suffer from verbal inflation. During the war our whole speech glowed with a tremendous moral idealism. It is necessary now to match all these winged words with the realities for which they stood. The currency of our idealism was scattered all over the world. Now everywhere there is a call for the gold back of the paper. And the call is proving disconcerting to those by whom words were not related to realities of honest purpose.

Just as we stand in need of physical production so that all our manufacturing establishments shall hum with activity, so we are in need of moral production to balance the currency which has been sent forth so lavishly. If we are to be saved from moral bankruptcy we must make our product in character equal our product in speech.

LYNN HAROLD HOUGH

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#### A CORRECTION

In connection with her article in the Round Table in the September number, Miss Lillian E. Whiton, of Long Beach, California, was reported to be connected with the junior high school there. For this blunder the editors take all the responsibility.